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Chairperson: Mr. Petkus (Lithuania)

Contents

Agenda item 32: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories *(continued)*

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 32: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories *(continued)* (A/64/332, 339, 340 and 354)

1. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said that the basic aim of General Assembly resolution 64/10 on follow-up to the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict was to uphold justice and support the efforts to combat impunity and ensure accountability for the serious human rights violations and grave breaches of international humanitarian law committed during Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip launched on 27 December 2008. The Movement wished to reiterate its conviction that respect for international law and United Nations resolutions and decisions would advance efforts towards achieving a just, peaceful, political settlement of the conflict.

2. The report showed that the human rights situation of the Palestinian people remained dire, as a result of Israel's unlawful policies and practices, as corroborated by other recent reports. The situation had continued to deteriorate over the past year and the effect on lives and the toll of destruction and loss continued to increase at an alarming rate, particularly in the Gaza Strip as a result of the Israeli military operations of December 2008 and the continuing unlawful blockade. The Movement condemned Israel's ongoing military occupation of the Palestinian Territory and all other Arab territories, and called for the immediate cessation of Israel's illegal practices and the urgent resumption of peace process negotiations that were clearly based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference — particularly the principle of Land for Peace — the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map towards the achievement of a two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

3. Israel's incessant violations of international law must be considered seriously by all relevant United Nations organs and appropriate actions and measures must be taken to remedy the unjust situation. The report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, the endorsement of its recommendations, and the General Assembly resolution calling, inter alia, for investigations by both sides and the reconvening of the conference of High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention on measures to enforce and ensure respect of the Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, constituted important first steps in that direction.

4. Throughout its occupation, Israel had carried out deliberate and unlawful policies and practices aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and nature of the Palestinian Territory, in particular through the confiscation of large areas of Palestinian land, its illegal settlement policy and the construction of the wall in the West Bank. In addition, hundreds of checkpoints and roadblocks continued to restrict the movement of persons and goods, which seriously undermined the integrity of the Territory, completely isolating East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. Furthermore, Israel had demolished more than 24,000 Palestinian homes and at least 1,500 new demolition orders had been made. The enforced displacement of Palestinians and their replacement with illegal settlers must be condemned by the international community. Some settlers, with the support of the Israeli Government, were waging a campaign of violence and intimidation against Palestinian civilians and perpetrating acts of incitement, in East Jerusalem in particular, where illegal excavations continued to be undertaken at holy sites.

5. The illegal settlement activities were a serious violation of international law and defied the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and the repeated calls by the international community for an immediate cessation of all such activities. Despite all efforts made in the context of the peace process, Israel had escalated settlement activities and refused to comply with the international community's calls to stop and dismantle all settlement outposts. In addition to constituting flagrant violations of international law, such actions also heightened tensions, further destabilized the fragile situation on the ground and adversely affected the peace process. Israel must abide by all its obligations under international law, including under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

6. The Movement also reaffirmed that all measures taken, or to be taken, by Israel to alter the legal, physical and demographic situation and institutional structure of the occupied Syrian Golan, and measures to impose Israeli jurisdiction and administration there,

had no legal effect. All such measures, including the illegal construction and expansion of Israeli settlements in the Syrian Golan since 1967, constituted violations of international law, international agreements, the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations, and were a challenge to the international community. The Movement called on Israel to abide by Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw completely from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967.

7. The Non-Aligned Movement reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to a just, peaceful and comprehensive solution in the Middle East and to the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to exercise its self-determination and sovereignty in an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

8. **Mr. Weissbrod** (Israel) said that although the Middle East was marred by terrorists who rejected the most fundamental human rights, his Government remained committed to upholding those rights. Israel's democratic institutions, independent and highly professional judiciary and vibrant public debate ensured that it held itself to the highest international standards and its commitment to justice and to the sanctity of human rights was on a par with that of other democratic States. However, the Special Committee's report was not dedicated to the advancement of human rights; it was part of a calculated, systematic political campaign designed to vilify Israel and the right of its citizens to live in peace and security, denying them the very rights that it purported to cherish for others. Israel had refused and would continue to refuse to cooperate with the Special Committee because, like other United Nations bodies, it had predetermined its findings and conclusions.

9. For example, the report failed to mention that since 2001, more than 8,600 rockets had been launched from the Gaza Strip against Israeli towns and villages; the majority had been fired after Israel's full withdrawal from Gaza in 2005. Yet in its description of Operation Cast Lead, the report accused Israel of attacking Gaza for no reason; unbelievably, the eight years of Hamas rocket and mortar attacks on Israeli men, women and children, both farmers and city dwellers, were not mentioned. Similarly, the report ignored the current Hamas military build-up in Gaza, which endangered both Israeli and Palestinian civilians; the recent test of a Hamas missile with a range of 65 kilometres that would place most of Israel's major population centres within reach of terrorist attack; and the ships that transported weapons, rather than aid, from Iran to the people of Gaza across the Red Sea.

10. Despite that effort to "cherry-pick" information for politicized reasons in the report, the past year had been marked by many positive developments in the West Bank that had been acknowledged by the Quartet and other relevant bodies that sought to promote peace rather than the Special Committee's predictable narrative. The Palestinian economy had grown by over 7 per cent as a result of the removal of checkpoints in the West Bank and the extension of the Allenby Bridge hours of operation, which had facilitated the transfer of goods and persons. Despite the enormous security risks involved, Israel had taken many similar measures in an effort to find a balance between its legitimate security needs and its desire to foster growth and lay the foundations for peace.

11. His Government was committed to reaching a permanent peace agreement that would allow the Israeli and Palestinian peoples to live in peace, security and dignity, and Israelis longed for a time when the two peoples would be able to direct their joint energies towards productive endeavours of mutual and universal benefit. Organs which issued distorted reports like that of the Special Committee did not advance the goal of peace; on the contrary, they reinforced ingrained biases and deepened the reflexive hostility towards Israel that had fuelled the conflict for so long.

12. **Mr. Hosseini** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Israeli regime's practices were affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories. Ending the more than six decades of occupation and providing the conditions necessary for the Palestinian people to freely exercise their right to self-determination should therefore be given the highest priority. The report of the Special Committee indicated that the situation had deteriorated over the past year.

13. Following Israel's brutal assault on Gaza, world public opinion had protested against the regime and many international organizations had taken steps to address the criminal acts committed during and after the military assault. The reports of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission and of the Board of Inquiry, as well as and the relevant resolutions recently adopted by

the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, were steps in the right direction. The United Nations must take decisive measures to address the crimes committed by the occupying regime in Gaza, including those described in the Goldstone report. The report's recommendations should be considered a valid basis for the prosecution of those involved. Excessive and disproportionate force had been used and civilian objects targeted indiscriminately, including with white phosphorus munitions. In addition, a number of violations of humanitarian law, including deliberate attacks on schools operated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the imposition of collective punishment measures and of severe restrictions on imports to [illegible] and the continued detention of Palestinians, including children, in incommunicado conditions for prolonged periods of time, were a source of great concern. Such crimes were a clear indication that the aggressive nature and repressive policies of the regime remained unchanged.

14. While his delegation condemned the gross violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people, it believed that it was incumbent upon the international community to counter such illegal and inhuman practices and bring the perpetrators to justice. Indeed, there needed to be a greater emphasis on practical steps to enforce human rights standards and norms in the occupied territories.

15. Access to first-hand information was paramount. It was regrettable to note that, though the Special Committee had undertaken useful missions to Egypt, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, it had not been able to gain access to the occupied territories because of obstruction from Israel. The Israeli policy clearly ran counter to all relevant international instruments.

16. The right to self-determination was vitally important and his delegation strongly supported the Special Committee's conclusion that the ongoing policy of fragmentation of the occupied territories, the continuing construction of the separation wall and increased settlement activities dramatically affected the territorial contiguity and social fabric of the Palestinian people and constituted a gross violation of international law.

17. The Golan was an integral part of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran condemned all measures taken to undermine that country's territorial integrity and was deeply concerned over the deterioration in the human rights situation and the increase in illegal settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan.

18. All Palestinians, including Muslims, Christians and Jews, and especially the refugees who had experienced the ordeals of exile for many years, should freely decide their own future in a referendum. A durable peace would only be possible through the full restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people and the establishment of an independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

19. Addressing the comments made by the Israeli representative, he said that a regime that relied on aggression, assassination, State terrorism, kidnapping, torture and all kinds of abhorrent policies should not portray itself as an advocate of democracy and a warrior for human rights. Instead of employing those familiar smokescreen tactics, he would do well to listen to the debate about the gross violations of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians and others in the occupied territories. Doing so would enable him to recognize the cause of the tension and conflict in the region. The representative of an entity that systematically violated so many principles of international law and human rights, and which was the primary source of threat, terror and intimidation in the Middle East and around the world, was in no position to level baseless allegations against other countries. He called on the international community to acknowledge the detrimental effects of Israeli policies and activities and to take decisive measures to prevent further violations of human rights and humanitarian law by the Israeli regime in the occupied territories.

20. **Ms. Vivas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that her delegation welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 64/10 regarding follow-up to the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict. The support of a majority of Member States for that resolution reflected their conviction that impunity for the Israeli Government must stop, since such impunity was the main obstacle to a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

21. Her delegation firmly supported the work of the Special Committee, welcomed its excellent and detailed report and joined other delegations in calling for an immediate end to the Israeli presence in the

occupied territories as a prerequisite for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

22. The human tragedy caused by the Arab-Israeli political conflict had been exacerbated in the period following the establishment of the Special Committee. The present situation in the Gaza Strip had reached the level of a humanitarian catastrophe, as a direct consequence of the recent armed aggression by the Israeli Defense Forces and the severe restrictions imposed on the movement of people and goods. Eighty-five per cent of the population in Gaza was dependent on food aid; while restrictions on the entry of medical supplies, combined with the damage to health-care centres and hospitals caused by the Israeli offensive, had given rise to a health crisis.

23. Her delegation was deeply concerned at the lack of significant progress made towards the realization of the inalienable, permanent and unqualified right of the Palestine people to self-determination, including their right to live in freedom, justice and dignity and to establish their sovereign, independent, democratic and viable contiguous State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 10/20. On the contrary, the Israeli Government had continued its systematic policy of aggression against the Palestinian people, including the destruction of infrastructure and homes in the Gaza Strip and the construction of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, showing clear disregard for the advisory opinion dated 9 July 2004 of the International Court of Justice and the Fourth Geneva Convention. The freedom of movement of the Palestinian people was also increasingly hindered by numerous road blocks, closures and checkpoints. Such policies and practices were contrary to the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination; they also contravened international law and were detrimental to the peace process. It was therefore time to demand respect for the human rights of the Palestinian people, which had been sacrificed for more than 60 years on the pretext of safeguarding Israel's security.

24. Her delegation, which had called on the Security Council to investigate Israel's failure to comply with Council resolutions on peace and security in the Middle East, also endorsed the recommendations of the Special Committee, particularly its request that the General Assembly should urge Member States to intensify their efforts to enforce Israel's compliance with relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions, and international humanitarian and human rights law, and its call for Israel to end its occupation of the Syrian Golan, pursuant to Security Council resolution 497 (1981). Lastly, she paid tribute to the resolute spirit of the Palestinian people, who were an example and an inspiration to all peoples struggling for a just peace and the right to self-determination.

25. **Ms. Khan** (Bangladesh) expressed grave concern over the serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law committed by Israel during its military operations in Gaza and endorsed the findings and recommendations of the report of the Special Committee. Israel had used excessive force and had not even spared the compound of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Gaza and continued to impose restrictions on the movement of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory during the Gaza war. The humanitarian situation had been exacerbated by more blockades, continued construction of the separation wall on Palestinian land and expansion of Israeli settlements, and a wide range of Israeli Government policies had changed the demographic make-up of the occupied territories.

26. Israeli forces had systematically violated human rights and legal norms. Bangladesh strongly condemned the harassment and humiliation of Palestinians, especially women and girls, at checkpoints and even in their own homes during security searches. As the occupying Power, Israel must comply with its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention, applicable international law and international humanitarian law.

27. She reiterated her delegation's unwavering support for the cause of the Palestinian people and their legitimate and inalienable right to a sovereign and independent homeland. Noting that the peaceful solution to the conflict lay in the road map drawn up by the Quartet, she urged the parties concerned to implement the recommendations made in the report.

28. Israel must lift its embargo on Palestine and open all border crossings to allow the free movement of goods, people and humanitarian aid. Indeed, freedom of movement must be extended throughout the occupied territories. Furthermore, it must put an end to the collective punishment of civilians in Gaza, stop the

construction of the separation wall and comply fully with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and with General Assembly resolution ES-10/15. Lastly, Israel must withdraw fully and unconditionally from the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem and all other occupied Arab lands.

29. **Mr. Khair** (Jordan) said that his delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report of the Special Committee, which should continue its work until Israel ended its occupation of Arab territory. He called upon Israel to cooperate with the Special Committee and to comply with its recommendations.

30. The report highlighted the considerable number of violations of inalienable Palestinian rights by Israel and made it clear that the situation in the Gaza Strip was a humanitarian disaster, especially as a result of the continuing Israeli-imposed blockade. Various United Nations experts and human rights rapporteurs had called for the blockade to be lifted in order to allow unrestricted imports of medical supplies, foodstuffs, agricultural inputs, fuel and construction materials, grant prompt permission for patients with medical referrals for treatment outside Gaza and ensure the unhindered movement of civilians. He endorsed that call and hoped that reconstruction work in the Gaza Strip would soon be undertaken in order to ease the suffering of the population. He also called upon the international community to ensure that human rights work continued with regard to the Palestinian people, including the people of Gaza.

31. Israel's abusive practices against the Palestinians and the Arab inhabitants of the occupied territories were incompatible with a desire for peace, or with Israel's obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. Israel must cease those practices forthwith. If any progress were to be made, the Palestinian economy must be revived, which would require the discontinuation of unjustified closures and the removal of checkpoints.

32. The continuing expansion of settlements in the West Bank and Israel's plan to build thousands of housing units in East Jerusalem over the forthcoming 10 years violated international law. Indeed, Israeli measures resulting from settlement building, including the expulsion of Palestinians and the destruction of their homes in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, were a clear violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Settlements seriously impeded Palestinians' movement and development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and prevented them from exercising their right to their land and water resources.

33. He called for an immediate and complete halt to settlement activity, including so-called "natural growth" in existing settlements, noting that settlements undermined prospects for an independent and viable Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and were a threat to peace in the region as a whole.

34. Israel continued to shirk its legal and moral responsibilities as the occupying Power by continuing to build the separation barrier, which was destroying the social fabric of Palestinian society, making thousands of Palestinian civilians homeless and increasing their economic hardship. Furthermore, the barrier threatened the establishment of a viable Palestinian state and undermined peace efforts.

35. In occupied East Jerusalem, the scale and pace of unilateral Israeli violations, including excavations around and under Muslim and Christian holy sites, house demolitions, the expulsion of Arab inhabitants, and attempts to change the demographic character of East Jerusalem and impede the work of the Waqf Administration were increasing. Those actions impeded efforts to achieve a two-State solution and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The international community must shoulder its responsibilities and adopt a firm position in order to prevent such actions.

36. His delegation believed that it was totally unacceptable for any action to be taken in Jerusalem that would adversely affect the city. Safeguarding Jerusalem would remain a priority for Jordan, which would spare no effort to protect it and its Muslim and Christian sites. Given the significance of Jerusalem to millions of Muslims and Christians throughout the world, Israel's illegal actions threatened global peace and security.

37. The key to resolving other conflicts, and therefore to ensuring the region's security and stability, was to find an equitable and comprehensive two-State solution to the Palestinian question.

38. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon) said the Israeli army believed that Palestinians did not have the right to life; that much could be read in its graffiti. That was why Israeli soldiers used them as human shields in Gaza,

evicted them from their homes in East Jerusalem or demolished those homes. Indeed, Israeli soldiers targeted and killed Palestinian civilians with impunity and destroyed food factories, hospitals and sewage systems. They detained Arabs for unlimited periods, including young children.

39. His delegation called for a just and comprehensive resolution of the Middle East conflict and an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and for the establishment of a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine. It welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 64/10 and called for immediate action on the findings of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict.

40. Lebanon condemned the blockade of Gaza, demanded that Israel should end it and open the crossing points and condemned Israel's disruption of humanitarian access to the West Bank and demanded an end to colonization activity, including settlements, the separation wall and demolitions of homes in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Indeed, colonization activity undermined the unity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and jeopardized the two-State solution.

41. Lebanon called on Israel to abide by the Fourth Geneva Convention and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, and called for the expeditious operation of the United Nations Register of Damage caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Furthermore, Israel should stop targeting Islamic sites, particularly the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, which was protected under international law, and end the practice of detaining and imprisoning thousands of Palestinians. Israel should comply with Security Council resolution 497 (1981) relating to the occupied Syrian Golan.

42. He condemned the brutal Israeli practices in occupation prisons and expressed concern over the inhuman conditions of the Syrian detainees in the occupied Syrian Golan, calling upon Israel to reopen the Quneitra entry point, so that Syrian citizens under Israeli occupation could visit their motherland.

43. **Ms. Msechu** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that her delegation supported a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of international law, Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative. It also supported the two-State solution.

44. She expressed concern over the continuing unlawful activities of Israel, the occupying Power, including the expansion of settlements, house demolitions and forced evictions from the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem and urged Israel to stop those activities in order to allow both sides to resume the stalled peace negotiations. Indeed, her delegation supported the current efforts by the United States of America to bring both sides back to the negotiating table.

45. The expanding settlements and the construction of the wall were major obstacles to the peace process. Her delegation deplored the excessive and indiscriminate use of force against the civilian population and urged the Israeli Government to lift its embargo on the Palestinians, opening the border crossings to allow the free movement of people and goods and the entry of humanitarian aid. It equally supported the right of Israeli civilians to live in peace and the steps it called for would pave the way for the two sides to live side by side.

46. She called on the international community, particularly the Security Council, to take the necessary action to ensure the resumption of the peace process in accordance with its obligations and commitments under the Quartet road map. Lastly, she reiterated her delegation's support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle for their fundamental rights, including the right to an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital. The exercise of that right was in the long-term interest of both Israel and Palestine.

47. **Mr. Jomaa** (Tunisia) said that his delegation was extremely concerned over the deteriorating situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan depicted in the report of the Special Committee. The ongoing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, including the blockade, had resulted in grave loss of life and damage to property and infrastructure.

48. Israel's violations of, and restrictions on, the fundamental rights of the Palestinians and the Syrian residents of the occupied Syrian Golan, including their rights to life, health, work, education and freedom of movement, also violated international principles and

resolutions. Urgent action was required to end those practices and the suffering of the Palestinian people.

49. Furthermore, the multitude of illegal Israeli practices, including the ongoing settlement activity and construction of the separation barrier coupled with confiscations of property, had adverse repercussions on the living conditions of Palestinians.

50. He called upon the international community and other actors to compel Israel to honour its obligations, especially those pertaining to the road map and the relevant United Nations resolutions, and to heed the repeated demands of the Quartet, in particular those which called for an immediate halt to the construction of settlements. Settlement expansion posed a grave danger, not only to Palestinian rights, but also to any hope of a resumption of the peace process as a whole.

51. The question of Palestine remained a top priority for Tunisia, which continued to support the just cause of the suffering Palestinian people. He urged the international community and other actors to intervene immediately in order to put an end to Israeli acts of aggression and settlement activity. In that regard, unhindered humanitarian assistance should be provided to the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip.

52. In resolving conflicts, Tunisia supported the option of peace and dialogue based on international law. The stalled peace process heightened fears that the situation would further deteriorate. If the suffering of the Palestinian people were to end, a radical and long-term solution to the crisis must be found, whereby Palestinians would regain their legitimate rights, an independent Palestinian state would be established on Palestinian soil, and occupied Arab territory would be recovered. Such a solution would strengthen peace and increase stability for all peoples of the region.

53. **Mr. Lukwiya** (Uganda) expressed his country's full support for the work of the Special Committee. The Committee's report described the grim humanitarian situation in the occupied territories, an appalling human tragedy whose emotional toll in Gaza and the West Bank Uganda deplored. He called on Israel to take immediate steps to facilitate the movement of Palestinian people and goods and access by international humanitarian organizations to the occupied territories. He called for an end to the blockade and for a freeze on all settlement activity, including natural growth; land confiscations must be halted. Those actions undermined the spirit and credibility of the peace process.

54. His delegation commended UNRWA for the crucial role it continued to play in alleviating Palestinian suffering and called on the international community not only to honour its commitments to Palestine but also to increase its economic and social development assistance.

55. He reiterated Uganda's support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people. Uganda also fully supported the resumption of direct negotiations between Palestine and Israel and the establishment, through peaceful negotiations, of a sovereign, independent and viable State of Palestine, existing side by side with the State of Israel. It called for the international community, including the Quartet, to once more step up its efforts to support negotiations between the two sides, and for the full implementation of the road map.

56. The conflict in the Middle East had gone on for far too long and a just and durable solution was more urgent than ever before. His delegation was committed to supporting the efforts of all parties to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable peace as envisaged in Security Council resolution 1850 (2008).

57. **Mr. Kim** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that although a number of measures had been taken at the international level to resolve the Middle East question, they had not been translated into action because of the improper attempts of such countries as the United States of America, which tolerated and even encouraged Israel's occupation of Arab territories and the violations of human rights committed therein.

58. Israel continued its brutal military campaigns and the construction of the separation wall, while the blockade of the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the Gaza Strip remained in place. Palestinians were killed daily as a result or driven into exile as refugees. Those actions and policies constituted State terrorism and crimes against humanity; they clearly violated the Charter of the United Nations and international law and constituted a flagrant attempt to undermine the Middle East peace process.

59. The Non-Aligned Movement, as emphasized at its Fifteenth Summit Conference of Heads of State and Government, was committed to fully contributing to

the immediate and just settlement of the Palestinian issue. The first step towards that goal was putting an end to the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories, including Palestine. To that end, it was necessary to take, without delay, just and comprehensive measures aimed at realizing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Furthermore, the core issues, including borders, security, settlements, Jerusalem, refugees, water and prisoners must be resolved.

60. He commended UNRWA for its 60 years of humanitarian assistance and reiterated his delegation's full support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people.

61. **Mr. Ali** (Sudan) said that the Special Committee's report highlighted continuing illegal and inhuman practices by Israel, which violated the rights of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and of Arabs in the occupied Syrian Golan. The report's findings were consistent with those of previous reports, including the most recent report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (A/64/328), the report of the United Nations Headquarters Board of Inquiry and the combined report on the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories.

62. The report dealt with the effects of the war launched by Israel against the occupied Gaza Strip. That war had killed, injured and handicapped thousands, including women and children and had caused widespread destruction. United Nations premises had also been attacked. Continuing illegal actions in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, including settlement building, the destruction of Palestinians' homes and expropriation of their land, aimed to alter the demographic balance, prevent the establishment of an independent Palestine state and pre-empt the final-status negotiations.

63. Palestinians continued to suffer from the construction of the separation wall in the West Bank, which was ongoing despite a ruling of the International Court of Justice, and were subject to arrest and to attacks by Israeli settlers. As of 2009, there were 688 roadblocks and checkpoints restricting movement. Palestinians suffered violations of their rights to life, food, clothing and housing as well as to employment, health, access to education and water.

64. The report highlighted the increasing number of settlers in the occupied Syrian Golan, the construction of new infrastructure and factories and the exploitation of the land, water and other natural resources. Syrian Arab residents were subject to detention, denied employment opportunities, separated from their families and were exposed to landmines and to the deleterious effects of buried nuclear waste. Israel continued to deny United Nations bodies access to the occupied Syrian Golan.

65. His delegation supported the conclusions and recommendations of the Special Committee's report. It also supported an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital and called for the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab territories.

66. **Mr. Alzayani** (Bahrain) said that the annexation and settlement policies of the occupying Power and the ongoing construction of the separation wall in the West Bank and the occupied Syrian Golan had resulted in a serious deterioration in the situation in the territories occupied since 1967. Those policies violated such international agreements as the Hague Convention and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Aggression and the destruction of public and private property by the occupier had continued and the rights provided for in international instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which affirmed the right to life, liberty and security of person, were being violated.

67. In Jerusalem, the aim of the policy of the occupying Power was to empty that city of its Palestinian inhabitants and Judaize it. Actions taken included excavations, house demolitions and expulsions of Palestinians, in violation of United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 478 (1980) and Human Rights Council resolution S-12/1.

68. The Special Rapporteur for Human Rights noted that house demolitions unrelated to any security concerns had been a major device in extending Israeli control over the West Bank in a manner that impaired Palestinian rights. Palestinians were losing control over their land and their national identity. The presence of settlers, in addition to restrictions and closures, was breaking the Palestinian land up into isolated pockets.

and had resulted in higher unemployment and increased poverty.

69. The Israeli closure system was the primary cause of poverty and the humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Palestinians were displaced as a result of property destruction, land confiscation and the revocation of residency permits as well as occasional deportation. Furthermore, levels of deep poverty among refugees had increased.

70. The construction of the separation wall in the West Bank and around Jerusalem had increased Palestinian suffering and settler violence. The International Court of Justice, in its advisory opinion on the legal consequences of the separation wall, had ruled that the wall was illegal. It had also concluded that Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory violated international law.

71. Palestinians in the Gaza Strip had suffered greatly since Israel had first imposed a blockade in September 2007, closing all crossing points and declaring the territory an enemy entity. That blockade constituted collective punishment and was prohibited under the Fourth Geneva Convention. Palestinian suffering had been compounded by Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip. The Special Committee had concluded that the situation in the Gaza Strip had reached the level of a humanitarian catastrophe, while the report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission referred to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Many human rights experts had described actions taken by the Israeli Government in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as being systematically discriminatory and, in general, as denying the right of the Palestinian population to live in safety and with dignity.

72. In the occupied Syrian Golan, Israel had continued its annexationist and colonialist policies — building settlements, linking the economy of Syrian villages to Israel, confiscating land and water and expelling the Syrian inhabitants from their land — and had refused to comply with United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 497 (1981). There were also systematic misinformation campaigns which aimed to efface the Arab character of the Golan.

73. The Palestinian people's right to self-determination had been affirmed by the United Nations Millennium Declaration. Peace was a strategic choice. A just and comprehensive peace required full implementation of United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), compliance with previous agreements and adherence to the approach of the 1991 Madrid Conference, the principle of land for peace, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

74. As long as the Israeli occupation continued, the Palestinian people and Syrians in the occupied Syrian Golan would suffer. Human rights and basic freedoms would likewise continue to be curtailed until the occupation ended and the Palestinian people exercised its inalienable rights, including the right to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

75. **Mr. Gebreel** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that Palestinians had been suffering under the Israeli occupation since 1948; such occupation was also the main cause of instability in the Middle East. Illegal and inhumane Israeli practices and violations continued as a result of the occupation, as happened with all occupations. Expressing support for the statements of all previous speakers, he said that it would take hours to list all the violations committed by Israel. He wondered whether there was any treaty or international law that Israel had not yet violated in the occupied territories. All Member States must send a message to Israel that its practices, which had been condemned by many reports, were unacceptable. Indeed, an effort must be made to halt them.

76. Ten months after the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), there had been no change. Some even denied that the Palestinians were suffering as a result of the occupation and the blockade. It was necessary to support the Palestinian people who were fighting against occupation in order to enable them to exercise their inalienable rights.

77. **Mr. Taleb** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the allegations of the representative of the occupation authorities regarding Israel's respect for human rights were nonsense and ran counter to United Nations reports, the latest of which, the Goldstone report, had recorded war crimes and crimes against humanity by the occupying forces. If Israel really respected human rights it would allow the Special Committee access to the occupied territories. Furthermore, its claims that it respected human rights were contradicted by racist statements in Israel; two Israeli rabbis had said the previous day that it was permissible to kill Arab children and babies.

78. The will of the international community, which almost unanimously supported the Special Committee, its annual reports and the extension of its mandate, was ignored by Israel, despite the fact that Israel owed its existence to a controversial resolution of the General Assembly.

79. Israel did not know how to read history: though it said it had suffered rocket attacks since 2001, the Palestinians had been suffering since 1967. All events since then had been a legal and legitimate reaction to the illegal occupation. Indeed, Hamas had been founded only in 1987, 20 years after the occupation had begun.

80. It was strange that the representative of Israel had not said one word about the settlement construction campaigns, that gobbled up Palestinian land, especially the land of East Jerusalem.

81. **Mr. Hijazi** (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Israel held the record for violations by a nation of another people's human rights, international law and United Nations resolutions. Despite its claims of democracy, for 60 years it had denied more than 2.5 million refugees the right of return and refused to recognize their existence. It failed to recognize Palestinian villages, even ones inhabited by its own citizens. Human rights organizations had shown that the State had turned impunity into an institution, its soldiers and armed settlers literally getting away with the murder of Palestinians. He wondered how Israel, a "Jewish State", could be called a democracy when its laws and institutions had set in stone its discrimination against 20 per cent of the population. The country's Arab people were denied recourse to the international institutions established by the civilized world for the resolution of differences and the remedy of violations of international law, allowing Israel to carry out its abuses with impunity. Those abuses were documented by its closest allies, including the United States of America. Israel disdained international law and the international system as a whole. Though unacceptable, it was not surprising that Israel questioned the integrity of United Nations committees because it had never accepted a report by the United Nations or other independent organizations. It said that reports did not advance the goal of peace but its practices on the ground destroyed every hope for peace; an end to the practices would be better than an end to the reports.

82. Withdrawal did not amount to an end to occupation, no matter how many times Israel repeated it. In that regard, instead of fulfilling its obligation as the occupying Power, it had imposed a siege on the entire population of the Gaza Strip. Once more Israel had referred to its security needs to justify war crimes and gross violations of international law. However, the targets of Israeli actions, such as power plants, hospitals, water wells and other infrastructure, did not constitute threats to its security.

83. Palestine would continue to knock on the doors of the United Nations and all its bodies until the occupying Power ended its illegal and brutal practices and the occupation and until the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people were fulfilled, including the right to live free from fear, terror and oppression in an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.